



Opening of the Novitiate in PNG

KIUNGA, Papua New Guinea - On the Feast of the Presentation of our Lord, we entered officially into the Novitiate program. Also, the 2nd of February marked the Day of the Religious and it was really suitable to our entrance to the Novitiate Formation; Godwin, from the Diocese of Wewak, has completed his second year of Theological studies in Catholic Theological Institute (CTI); Anselm, from the Diocese of Wewak, has completed his first year of Theological Studies in CTI and Tresi (Larouche), from the Diocese of Daru-Kiunga has completed his Philosophical Studies also in CTI.

Our preparation to enter into the novitiate began with a three-day retreat. Fr. Leo BAYU, SMM journeyed with us through the retreat and we started with identifying the people who introduced us to Jesus and the Catholic faith. Then, we learned about the spirituality of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort and his desire for the little flock to be “liberos” and to walk in the footsteps of the poor apostles. Our task during the retreat was to identify the different skills and talents of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort and we integrated them in our personal prayer and reflection. Part of our prayer and reflection was to compose our own consecration prayer to the Blessed Mother Mary. It was something good and worth recognizing in the journey. Finally, we ended our retreat with the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and confession.

Among those who came to witness our day were the religious communities: the Brothers of St. Gabriel, the Sisters of Wisdom, and the Rosary Sisters together with our families and relatives who are working here in Kiunga and our benefactors and friends. They were all excited to witness our entrance to the Montfortian way of life. In the Rite of Investiture, we were each given a cassock to wear, a Bible and a God Alone to study, reflect and pray for God's inspirations.

It was the happiest moment of our life in the formation to enter into the Novitiate of the congregation of the Montfort Missionaries. In fact, something that touched us was the wearing of cassock. We have just entered into the Novitiate program, but we already felt a deep sense of being called religious in following the footsteps of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. A religious person is called to live a life dedicated to God. It is a special call because it heightens the awareness and responsibility to live out the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity in the footsteps of Jesus Christ himself. This is something that we are happy about and want to learn more during the novitiate formation. This Rite opens to us the desire to sharpen our focus towards the religious way of living and to think about the future and pray for God's will in our lives.

During the Rites, our Delegation Superior, Fr. Aloisius BANGGUR, SMM said in the exhortation that *"Montfort Missionaries are writing history and making progress in this land of Papua New Guinea. After 63 years of mission in Papua New Guinea, especially in this Diocese of Daru-Kiunga, the seed is growing. It is the seed of vocation. It is the first time today that Montfort Missionaries in PNG begins their own Novitiate."* It was a statement that we felt deep in our hearts because it is our special moment and we should treasure and pray for its growth always. During his exhortation, he challenged us to hold onto this faith and to continue this vocation because God has visions for each one of us and for the congregation as well. The rite concluded with the final blessing and gratitude to Fr. Roy MILLANO, SMM as our Novice Master who is going to journey with us. Then, a simple meal followed and some words of encouragement from Fr. Andrew, the vicar general of the diocese.

To conclude, we would like to thank God and the Congregation for giving us this opportunity to the next stage of our formation. We also thank those who have come to witness this program with us: the religious communities, our families, friends and others who have united with us in prayer. As we are starting, we continue to ask for your prayers and guidance so that we can see beyond our limitations and strive for what is best in our lives as future Montfortians in Papua New Guinea.

Godwin, Anselm and Tresì, Novices